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Be a Servant, Mr. Harding, Not a Leader

THE campaign is over and a decisive pronouncement by the American people has left no doubt as to the public intention. Whether the vote can be interpreted as a mandate, and if so, what the mandate is, will furnish matter for discussion. But that there was a strong desire for a change of administration, even the most ardent partisan would find it hard to gainsay.

The campaign itself represented a dearth of constructive ideas. Practically the only issue which the candidates discussed with any degree of coherence and continuity was the issue of the League of Nations. Yet it was not the League of Nations as idealistically conceived, but only a certain method of projecting the United States into a League which permitted a certain binding of American action by international military obligations. No one will doubt for a moment that if the issue had been stated as, "Shall we vote for Peace?" the expression would have been just as many millions strong for peace. Neither will anyone doubt that if the question had been, "Does the American people favor a League of Peace?" the answer would have been as decidedly in the affirmative. But the impression was very deep among the people that the present conditions of League membership make it somewhat resemble a League of War, and the United States is sick of war and all that pertains to it.

Taken in all its elements, it has been a strange time. The White House exerted practically no weight in the political development of the campaign, from the time of the conventions onward. Indeed, it may be said that the decline of Mr. Wilson's influence in contemporary American politics began before his second return from Paris. This, together with the strange apathy with which the sick man in the White House has been regarded, may be accounted for by the let-down which occurred in public hopefulness between the opening and the closing of the Versailles conference. On the matter of the strange lack of sympathetic expression for Mr. Wilson, however, it is perhaps to be remembered that the public has never been made fully aware of the extent of his physical disability.

The election of Mr. Harding, as he himself has very frankly said, was not a personal tribute to the man. All that was said at the time of his nomination concerning his lack of public fame was true. He was but little known. It is perhaps a testimony to the fact of his being well known, though only to a few, that those who knew him went so far as to endorse him for the Presidency. They felt he had the capacity to rise to presidential heights. It was Woodrow Wilson who once said that "no man is fit to be President until he is made President," which has been often true.

Mr. Harding, however, gradually grew in the esteem of the people as the campaign progressed. Questionable in

August, he grew into acceptability before November. He exhibited poise and discretion in several difficult matters, as well as a disposition to speak his mind as clearly as possible when speaking was called for. He maintained the personal dignity and the intellectual simplicity which we have been taught to expect in aspirants for the Chief Magistracy. His eventual selection for the office was received with a degree of quiet and a modesty of expectation which augur well.

If Mr. Harding is wise, he will see to it from this day forth that he shall not become entangled with some of the forces which proved the undoing of Woodrow Wilson. If he will always look away from the men who will try to surround him, to the millions of Americans who have elected him; if he will always refrain from alliances or acts which he would hesitate to exhibit in every city and under every circumstance;

if he will be distrustful where the people are distrustful; if he will only abide by the few strong instincts and the few plain rules which have always proved our best guide and defense, his administration will be successful and his name honored.

It is not brilliance that the American people expect of Mr. Harding, but soundness and dependability. There have been administrations so brilliant that they got in the way of the Nation, and impeded its normal development. After all, the great thing is the American Nation. It is the central spectacle. It is the exalted entity which must be served. The Administration is but one of the servants.

There have been Presidents who struck so compellingly certain chords which rule the popular imagination, that they quite obscured the American Nation. They have been, as it were, in the place of the American Nation. They were the central spectacle, they the exalted entity. Not so, however, with our most useful Presidents. We can forego a great deal of genius if we can only get enough of the salt

of Yankee common sense in the White House. That sort of sense has always proved quite adequate for internal or international affairs.

No President really leads the American Nation. He may formulate what it is thinking; he may say what it is saying, but ultimately it is the American Nation that decides and leads. The Nation will stand by the President who stands by the Nation.

The coming four years may be quiet years politically. Presidential fireworks may be wholly lacking. If so, well. The country needs to be allowed to find its feet again. It needs the sense of confidence that its general manager in the White House is attending to his job, in all its details. With this confidence, the country will go back to its own job and start in anew.

THIS WEEK

New Crusade for Children's Rights

What to Do to Obtain a Patent

New West in Denver's Civic Center

Jew Versus Non-Jew in New York
Finance

Another article in the interesting and most vital
magazine series ever published in America.

French Political Hegemony in Europe

Introducing His Majesty, King Peanut

Old Atlas and the Changing World

Editorials, Interesting Departments,
Splendid Illustrations, Mr. Ford's
Page, and Short Bits of Infor-
mation Well Worth Reading.